

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-20 SR-02 ORM-03 IO-14 SAM-01

SAB-01 USIE-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 DRC-01 INRE-00 SSO-00 /120 W

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O R 311006Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3373

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4329

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS

SUBJECT: GOI LEADERS ON SEBASTIA SETTLEMENT ATTEMPT

REF: TEL AVIV 4320

JIDDA 4436

1. SUMMARY, IN WAKE OF UNAUTHORIZED ATTEMPT AT ESTABLISHING NEW SETTLEMENT AT SEBASTIA, GOI IS BEING PRESSED TO CLARIFY ITS POLICY ON SETTLEMENTS. RABIN IS SCHEDULED TO ADDRESS KNESSET JULY 31 AFTER WHICH THERE IS TO BE THREE HOUR DEBATE, PRESUMABLY ON BOTH SEBASTIA INCIDENT AND SETTLEMENT POLICY IN GENERAL. END SUMMARY.

2. GOI POLICY ON SETTLEMENT WAS STATED MOST RECENTLY ON JULY 26, AFTER ALL DAY CABINET MEETING ON HOW TO HANDLE SEBASTIA INCIDENT (TEL AVIV 4245, PARA 3), -- I.E. SETTLEMENTS IN THE
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TERRITORIES ARE ESTABLISHED ONLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOVERNMENT

DECISIONS. EXPRESSING HIS OWN INTERPRETATIONS, DEFMIN PERES, ACCORDING TO JULY 26 YEDIOT AKRONOT, SAID " " WE SUPPORT SETTLEMENT EVERYWHERE IN THE CONTRY, BUT ONLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECURITY AND SETTLEMENTS NEEDS." AT JOINT LABOR PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND KNESSET FACTION MEETING JULY 29, PERES REPORTEDLY STATED THAT NO PART OF THE COUNTRY IS OUT OF BOUNDS FOR SETTLEMENT (TEL AVIV 4320, PARA 4).

3. PART OF CONFUSIONS AS TO WHAT REALLY IS GOI SETTLEMENT POLICY HAS ARISEN OUT OF PRESS REPORTS ON FIRST DAY OF SEBASTIA SETTLEMENT ATTEMPT THAT PERES WAS PREPARED TO ENTER INTO COMPROMISE WITH SETTLERS ALLOWING THEM TO MOVE TO ANOTHER LOCATION ON BORDER OF SAMARIA. PERES SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD ABOVE-MENTIONED LABOR PARTY GATHERING THAT HE HAD INFORMED LIKUD LEADERS BEGIN AND RIMALT THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO RECOMMEND THIS APPROACH TO CABINET, BUT THAT IT WAS IN DIRECT CONTRADICTION WITH CABINET'S POSITION NOT TO NEGOTIATE WITH SETTLERS ON TERMS FOR THEIR LEAVING SEBASTIA.

4. JUSTICE MINISTER ZADOK HAS TOLD US THATCABINET JULY 26 HAD INDEED DECIDED NOT TO ENTER INTO ANY COMPROMISE OR MAKE ANY PROMISES OR COMMITMENTS TO SETTLERS. ZADOK CHARACTERIZED ISSUE NOT AS POLITICAL ONE OF WHETHER GOI SANCTIONED SETTLEMENT ON WEST BANK BUT RATHER AS MATTER OF RESPECT FOR GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY. GOI WOULD NOT NEGOTIATED WITH GORUPS OF LAWBREAKERS.

5. RABIN HAS DECIDED TO MAKE STATEMENT ON SEBASTIA INCIDENT TO KNESSET JULY 31, TO BE FOLLOWED BY THREE HOUR DEBATE. THIS SHOULD PROVIDE FURTHER CLARIFICATIONBOTH AS TO GOVERNEMENT'S DECISION ON HANDLING OF SETTLERS AND BROADER ISSUE OF SETTLEMENT POLICY.

6. HAARETZ DOMESTIC AFFARIS COMMENTATOR BENZIMAN IN BITING ARTICLE JULY 29 HAS CHARGED THAT GOVERNMENT WAS NOT CANDID WITH PUBLIC ON SETTLEMENT ISSUE. BENZIMAN ACCUSED GOI OF OBFUSCATING SETTLEMENT POLICY BY REFERENCES TO ORDER OF PRIORITIES AND TIMING. HE WRITES," IT IS AN OPEN SECRET THAT THE GOVERNMENT RECOILS FROM SETTLEMENT INITIATIVES IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA. THE FREEZING OF SETTLEMENTPLANS IS NOT COINCIDENTAL. IT IS THE UNAVOIDABLE RESULT OF THE POLITICAL PRESSURE TO WHICH THE GOVERNEMENT CONFIDENTIAL

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IS SUBJECTED IN VIEW OF THE UPCOMING CONTACTS WITH JORDAN. THE GOVERNEMENT DOES NOT WANT SETTLEMENTS IN THE TERRITORIES AND IT OUGHT TO SAY SO, TO JUSTIFY ITS POSITION, AND TO BE PREPARED TO STAND THE POLITICAL TEST RESULTING FROM THAT SITUATION."

7. COMMENT.. WE BELIEVE THAT GOI HAS PREFERRED TO AVIOD SPELLING OUT ITS SETTLEMENT POLICY IN FULL DETAIL IN ORDER TO AVOID CHRUNING U P FIERCE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONTROVERSY. THE SEBASTIA

SETTLEMENT ATTEMP WAS NOT ONLY AN EFFORT TO "ESTABLISH FACTS"
BUT ALSO TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT'S HAND. IT IS TRUE
THAT THE GOI HAS REFRAINED FROM SANCTIONING SETTLEMENTS IN CERTAIN
PARTS OF THE WEST BANK, PARTICULARLY AROUND NABLUS. FOCUS ON ISSUE
OF LEGALITY AND RESPECT FOR GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY WAS IN PART
EFFORT TO AVOID NEW POLITICAL CONTROVERSY WITH RELIGIOUS POLICY.
THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT DIFFERENT MINISTERS HAVE DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS
ON THIS MATTER. WHERE RABIN STANDS MAY BE CLEARER AFTER TODAY'S
KNESSET DEBATE.
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